Annotated Bibliography: Optimizing Adult Student Outcomes in an Asynchronous Online

Learning Environment

Julianna Donaher

Master of Education Program, Northeastern University

EDU 6050: Education as an Advanced Field of Study

Jennifer Madonna

5/16/21

<center>**Peer-Reviewed Journal Article**</center>

Reference

Glenn, C. W. (2018). Adding the Human Touch to Asynchronous Online Learning. Journal of

    College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 19(4), 381–393. https://doi.org/

    10.1177/1521025116634104

Summary

Glenn's resourceful consideration of online learning takes the practitioner through best practices in the asynchronous environment. Her specific outlook focuses on recreating the human connection found inherently in traditional, in-person learning. While a great deal of time is spent describing the profile of successful and unsuccessful learners, so is attention given to how best to convert one to the other. Retention is at the focus of this study—and positive, meaningful connection is introduced as the panacea.

Assessment

It is interesting to note that Glenn's piece could have all the hallmarks of a poorly researched, puff piece. It is, after all, a kind of human interest story—"how do we put the humanity back in online learning?". Instead, I am pleased to find that Glenn uses her credibility as a social scientist to pull together previously disparate studies on the matter. Her ideas, while often the product of her expertise—are never unfounded or speculated. Glenn is a deeply experienced teacher whose motivations seem specific to furthering a field she has already contributed to greatly.

Reflection

For my area of study, this journal acts as a kind of teeing off point. By studying a comprehensive approach to the social sciences of online learning, I can begin to get a sense for best practices in retention. Because my ideal focus is not in curriculum design, but rather communal and environmental support—this source will serve me well going forward.

Popular News Source

Mintz, S. (2020, August 11). *8 Ways to Improve Your Online Course.* Inside Higher Ed. https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/8-ways-improve-your-online-course

Summary

With this brief but effective article, Steven Mintz of UT Austin outlines simple, clear ways to maximize online learning. His perspective is solely that of an instructor facing another round of pandemic-era teaching. For this reason he addresses most acutely how to care for distracted, overwhelmed students. Strategies include providing clear, bite-sized goals while paying careful attention to the unique nature of diversity in access. By this I mean he spends time reminding us that when we leave the classroom, each student logs in from a very different home. This changing access in things such as Wi-Fi connection and device reliability can create an inequity in experience that must be minded.

Assessment

While this is not an academic piece, Mintz calls upon a wealth of experience as an educator at an elite university. He also stands upon many, many entries and contributions to Inside Higher Ed's body of work. The topic is important to him on a personal level. As a clear victim of the pandemic attempting to teach other victims of the pandemic, his motivations are focused on genuine outcome and not tied to monetary gain. There is not hard quantitative research to this

piece, but it does not parade as such. This is a pathos-based approach to strategizing. It underlines many existing concepts—but it also exemplifies them in an accessible manner. For these reasons, I find the source credible.

Reflection

For our purposes, this entry represents the tens of thousands of similar articles that operate as kinds of "listicles" on improving online learning. While these are, again, not research projects, they represent the collective anecdotal, experience-based insight from "on the ground" educators. Not all educators have access to research bodies or their own academic development that might allow for such endeavors. I still feel their insight has significant value. For this reason, I have made sure to include such a source in my attempts to ascertain best practices.

Book or Book Chapter

Darby, F., & Lang, J. M. (2019). *Small teaching online : Applying learning science in online classe*s (pp. 75-105). https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/northeastern-ebooks/reader.action?docID=5780349

Summary

Chapter four of Darby & Lang's book focuses on the learning science behind building community in an online space. This consideration moves through the learning theories as proposed by Lev Vygotsky . The ultimate result is a comprehensive reasoning for why learning must awaken Vygotsky's zone of proximal development through social interaction and group problem solving. In this way, the discussion moves past the acknowledged window that we all have (community in online learning is good) and towards a qualitative, well-founded study of the learning science behind why we need collaborative learning. The chapter also lists specific

strategies in which one can activate Vygotsky's three types of presence (cognitive, social and teaching) in an online environment.

Assessment

This book acts an accessible guide to novice and experienced online educators alike. Flower Darby is an accomplished thought leader in education and uses a network of similarly qualified minds to compose this book. Darby is an established speaker in the education world, and while she does profit from book sales, I feel she has enough supporting word of mouth and reviews from the industry to mark her as credible.

Reflection

While this particular entry can skew into the K-12 realm, it offers enough universal learning science to apply to my purposes. By reviewing these chapters, specifically number four, I am reminded that commonly applied learning science still belongs in the online environment—it must simply be modified, and—in many cases— maximized for sustainable outcomes.

Conference Paper

Mustikasari, V., Suwono, H., & Farhania, K. (2020). Improving students' science learning outcomes through joyful-inquiry interactive demonstration assisted by game android. *AIP Conference Proceedings* 2215, 040008. https://doi-org.ezproxy.neu.edu/10.1063/5.0000566

Summary

The notes of these proceedings overview a study in which student's learning was assessed (pre and post test) through the effects of gameplay on an android device. Specifically, students were tested on their knowledge of the respiratory system after having studied through an interac-

tive online game. The study concludes that retention and cognitive processing is "moderately" improved through such a learning medium. While assessment was used to provide quantitative data, interviews with each student post-test also supported the outcomes with qualitative data.

Assessment

This study is incredibly well cited and articulated. Each practice is outlined, as are its motivations and influences. The writers are scientists who use extensively developed best practices to create a reliable, if very complex, analysis of what was done to reach these outcomes. Because their methods are presented with such detail, and because the paper has been cited since by equally reputable bodies, I consider it highly credible.

Reflection

For the purposes of developing online student outcomes in an asynchronous environment, I found this source to be the outlier in this document. What it does articulate for me, is the very real importance of gamifying learning. Just as with in-person learning, the process is better built and sustained when it contains joy. With such solid proof, it makes me speculate further on how to replicate this in an adult, asynchronous environments. We do not need to reinvent the wheel— we know what kind of learning is fun. But in a way we do need to reinvent the wheel. As other sources have indicated, learning online is a whole different ballgame.

<center>**Dissertation**</center>

McMurtry, K. (2016). *Effective teaching practices in online higher education* (Order No.

    10009478).(1762585121) [Doctoral Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University]. Available from ProQuest One Academic; Social Science Premium Collection. https://

Summary

This comprehensive study aims to identify exemplary educators, online classrooms, and their uniquely successful characteristics. The conclusion, in summary, arrives at the reality that we must recreate connection, and clearly communicate through structure. Instruction must be incremental, and students must be armed with a unique set of skills to organize their time. Lastly, McMurty's dissertation lists clear feedback as a proven method of optimizing outcomes in online environments.

Assessment

This paper is by nature the product of extensive peer review and revision. It is born of an established university and highly reputable academic body. I also note it has been referenced 35 times following its publication. Many of these referencing bodies are also peer-reviewed. The appendices of the paper also include the invitations sent to participants, as well as detailed record of the various stages of approval the study progressed through. I don't know how to produce more credibility than that.

Reflection

Along with Glenn's consideration of the 'human touch' in online learning, this is probably the most significant piece of research in my study. McMurty's detailed and well supported conclusion on the value of the human touch validates my hypothesis that outcomes excel in an environment where students are meant to feel a part of their learning. I also very much benefit

from this paper's approach of having online educators learn from a record of the practice from the most successful online educators. Because the definition of successful is well defined and exemplified, there is much to be taken away from this paper.

Video or Podcast

Pearson North America. (2020, April 23). *Teaching with impact: Effective strategies to engage students in online learning.* [Video]. https://www.pearson.com/ped-blogs/blogs/2020/04/ teaching-impact-effective-strategies-engage-students-online-learning.html

Summary

This learning module from Pearson runs through some introductory tips for maintaining a successful online classroom environment. Teachers viewing this video will be reminded of some basic people management skills that can be applied from far away. For example, the simple step of personalizing interactions with students based on what you know of them and smiling to create a welcoming tone to your voice.

Assessment

Pearson is a reputable and enormous voice in education. They call up that ethos and speak with significant authority in this video. While they certainly profit from consumers utilizing their products, it's worth noting that this particular source is not monetized, nor does it have nested advertisements. For this reason, and the reference list clearly provided, I find this source credible. After all, the real profit they receive comes from maintaining their reputation of reliability.

Reflection

While this video feels a little rushed (it was posted in April of 2020), and while it focuses on hybrid synchronous/asynchronous K-12 learning, I still find it an accessible and valuable piece of my research. After all, I am looking for specific strategies to maximize outcome through engagement in asynchronous online learning environments. Largely, what it calls me to consider is how adults also need positive reinforcement and feedback in this sometimes challenging environment. While it must be curbed to a more serious tone, less it become condescending, some of the recommendations here will still have considerable value.